

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 0594

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TAGS: PROP, ALIB, SCUL, YE, US

SUBJECT: CLOSING OF FOREIGN CULTURAL CENTERS - IMPACT ON USIS

REF: SANAA 0405:

1. QAO NUGENT AND BRITISH COUNCIL REP SMITH MET AGAIN WITH IPA DEAN GHALIB MARCH 4. ALSO ATTENDING MEETING WERE ACTING HEAD FORMIN POLITICAL SECTION MUHAMMAD ABDULLA AL-WAZIR, UN/IPA -DVISORY TEAM LEADER ROBERTS AND BRITISH COUNCIL CONTRACT SUPERVISOR OF IPA TEFL PROGRAM, NORMAN BIRD.

2. GHALIB BEGAN MEETING BY SAYING IT FORTUNATE BOTH COUNCIL AND YEMEN-AMERICANLANGUAGE INSTITUTE, WHICH ARE ONLY FOREIGN-RUN CULTURAL CENTERS YARG WISHES KEEP IN OPERATION, ARE ALSO ONLY TWO ENGAGED IN ENGLISH TEACHING. THIS COINCIDENCE PROVIDES YARG WITH CONVENIENT RATIONALE FOR KEEPING THEM OPEN, BY LOOSELY LINKING THEM TO IPA. AT SAME TIME, HE CONTINUED, THEIR LINKAGE TO IPA HELPS YARG FORESTALL CRITICISM FROM OTHER GOVERNMENTS WHOSE CULTURAL CHNTERS BEING CLOSED THAT IT SHOWING FAVORITISM BY SELECTIVELY

CLOSING SOME CENTERS AND LEAVING OTHERS OPEN. TO SUCH CRITICISM YARG COULD NOW REPLY THAT YALI AND COUNCIL INTEGRATED WITH IPA, AND NOT FOREIGN CULTURAL CENTERS AT ALL.

3. ROBERTS FILIBUSTERED MOST OF MEETING BY FRETTERING OVER COMPLEXITY AND DELICACY OF SETTING UP COORDINATION AGREEMENT WHICH
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ACCEPTABLE ALL PARTIES. HE WENT ON AT LENGTH CONJURING UP

FAR-FETCHED SITUATIONS IN WHICH COORDINATION COULD CAUSE
POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR ONE OR OTHER OF PARTIES, PARTICULARLY IPA.

4. AL-WAZIR, CLEARLY PIQUED AT ROBERTS' TRAIN OF THOUGHT, CUT HIM OFF IN MID SENTENCE, SAYING THAT INTRICATE AND LENGTHY NEGOTIATIONS NOW WHAT HE DESIRED AT ALL. SMITH HAD BROUGHT WITH HIM BRIEF WRITTEN STATEMENT OF COUNCIL ACTIVITIES. AL-WAZIR ASKED NUGENT PREPARE SIMILAR DOCUMENT, SAYING THAT ONCE IT SUBMITTED, HE WOULD REVIEW BOTH STATEMENTS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AND GHALIB AND INFORM NUGENT AND SMITH THAT THEY COULD CONTINUE OPERATIONS AS BEFORE, BUT IN ASSOCIATION WITH IPA. HE THEN ROSE FROM HIS SEAT, SAID HE HAD TO GET BACK TO WORK AND LEFT ROOM.

5. AL-WAZIR ACCEPTED RIDE WITH NUGENT TO FOR MIN. IN CAR, HE SAID ROBERTS MOST LONG WINDED PERSON HE HAD EVER MET AND THAT HE TRYING APPLY BUREAUCRATIC SOLUTION TO POLITICAL PROBLEM. AL-WAZIR EMPHASIZED HE WANTED ENTIRE MATTER RESOLVED QUICKLY AND SMOOTHLY, WITHOUT COMPLICATIONS FOR YARG, COUNCIL AND USIS. NUGENT CONCURRED THIS APPROACH, AND SUGGESTED ROBERTS MIGHT BEST BE LEFT OUT FUTURE DISCUSSIONS.

6. NUGENT PRESENTED STATEMENT OF CURRENT YALI ACTIVITIES TO AL-WAZIR THIS DATE. PREPARED WITH EMBASSY GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT LISTS ENGLISH TEACHING, STUDENT COUNSELING, SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS, AND BOOK DONATIONS AS YALI'S PRINCIPAL CURRENT ACTIVITIES. DOES NOT MENTION PRESS ACTIVITIES AND MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTION, SINCE NUGENT ENGAGES IN THESE ACTIVITIES AS PAO, NOT AS DIRECTOR YALI. DOES NOT LIST SUCH PROGRAMS AS FILM SHOWINGS AND LECTURES,

SINCE VIRTUALLY ALL SUCH PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN OFF-PREMISES, AND THEREFORE NOT "PRINCIPAL" YALI ACTIVITIES. WORDING OF DOCUMENT MAKES IT EASY FOR YARG GIVE APPROVAL TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS, WHICH IT CLEARLY WANTS DO. AT SAME TIME, DOCUMENT IS SO WORDED TO AVOID INTERPRETATION THAT YALI'S PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES ARE ITS ONLY ACTIVITIES, OVIYAT ITS CURRENT ACTIVITIES ARE ONLY ONES IT INTENDS UNDERTAKE IN FUTURE.

7. IN PAST TWO WEEKS, LIBYAN CULTURAL CENTER SANAA CLOSED AND CULTURAL ATTACHE DEPARTED PERMANENTLY. RUSSIAN CENTERS SANAA AND TAIZ AND IRAQI CENTER TAIZ ALSO CLOSED. SYRIAN CENTER SANAA
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STILL OPEN, BUT NAME CHANGED TO "ARAB CULTURAL CENTER." NOT YET CERTAIN WHETHER SYRIANS STILL IN CHARGE THAT CENTER, OR WHETHER IT NOW UNDER YEMENI DIRECTION.

8. COMMENT: MARCH 4 MEETING WAS ENCOURAGING, SINCE NEITHER AL-WAZIR NOR GHALIB SUPPORTED ROBERT'S LINE OF REASONING THAT TERMS OF YALI AND COUNCIL COORDINATION WITH IPA MUST BE FORMAL AND CLEARLY DEFINED. AT ONE POINT, ROBERTS REFERRED TO IPA "SUPER-

VISION" OF YALI AND COUNCIL ACTIVITIES, BUT NEITHER AL-WAZIR NOR
GHALIB USED THAT WORD. ALL SIGNS STILL INDICATE THAT YARG INDEED
DETERMINED KEEP BOTH YALI AND COUNCIL OPERATING WITHOUT ANY
SERIOUS RESTRICTIONS, EITHER IN THEORY OR FACT.
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